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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (12/23): President Abbas says he will not allow another uprising to take place

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Main Stories:  
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The lead stories in the Palestinian media today focuses on the reported lack of progress in the prisoner exchange deal between Hamas and Israel. The German mediator is quoted in the press urging Israel to reconsider its reservations regarding the deal.

Independent dailies Al-Quds and Al-Ayyam front page news citing Israeli TV Channel One that the Israeli cabinet approved the release of 125 out of 170 prisoners from Hamas' list of names. The German mediator will meet with Hamas leaders today in Gaza to pass them the Israeli response. Independent news outlet Maan reports that Abu Mujahid, spokesperson for the Popular Resistance Committees, said that the Palestinian armed groups holding Shalit will meet today as soon as the groups receive the Israeli response from the German mediator.

The dailies run headlines accusing Israel of obstructing the deal by its insistence on expelling a number of prisoners after being released.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' interview with the Wall Street Journal published on Tuesday receives front page coverage in the dailies. Abbas is quoted saying that he stopped a third Palestinian intifada from occurring during the Israeli war in Gaza last winter and said he will not allow another uprising to take place as long as he is in office.

Abbas also reiterated his call for a complete settlement freeze in the West Bank and East Jerusalem prior to holding direct talks with Israel, and warned of the increased depression among Palestinians due to the continued settlers' attacks and stalled negotiations.

The dailies front page news and photos of the third European humanitarian aid convoy for Gaza arriving in Amman yesterday from London with hundreds of British, Syrian, Turkish, Jordanian and European volunteers.

Al-Quds reports on the Al-Aqsa Institute for Cultural Heritage condemning Israel's widespread excavations under the mosque, including stealing stones and monuments from the Ummayad palaces near the mosque. The paper runs a front page photo of Israeli workers stealing the stones from the Ummayad palaces.

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Al-Quds runs an editorial under the title "Why is Israel Hesitant to Conclude the Prisoner Exchange Deal?" questioning why the right wing in Israel is not willing to make a decisive decision in the prisoner exchange deal three and a half years after Shalit was kidnapped. The writer finds no justification for the Israeli hesitance in concluding the deal after all these years and questions why the government would allow Israeli right-wing extremists to have the final say in such a deal. The writer also believes that in addition to the limited number of prisoners that would be released in this deal, all Palestinian prisoners should be freed if a genuine peace process is to start.

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